



# Environmental Purchasing Bulletin

## Green Cleaning at Transit Facilities

November 7, 2008

King County EP Bulletin #109

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- 2007 Annual Report
- Past EP Bulletins

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### Introduction

Custodial personnel in King County's Metro Transit Division have improved their cleaning processes by implementing "green cleaning" techniques at the 20 Transit operating and maintenance buildings, including industrial shops and offices, and the downtown Seattle bus tunnel. Green cleaning includes not only the products you use but also policies, procedures and training to clean effectively and efficiently with less impact on human health and the environment.

### Green Cleaning at Transit Facilities



#### SAVE MONEY AND RESOURCES!

King County Transit reduced product use  
from 30 different cleaning products  
to 2 main "green" cleaners

*Picture: Transit custodial worker cleaning the bathroom  
with green cleaners and a microfiber mop*

In order to implement green cleaning at Transit's facilities, the Custodial Maintenance work group first focused on the chemicals they were using and narrowed down approximately 30 products to 2 main cleaning chemicals. These are certified by Green Seal and EcoLogo, independent third party certifiers, as environmentally preferable. All products are purchased in concentrate and are diluted to proper ratios on-site with closed-circuit dispensing systems. This results in a reduction in waste, shipping costs, and employee's risk of chemical exposure. Also, all paper products used meet or exceed EPA standards for post-consumer recycled content.



Transit's Custodial team won this "Excellence in Building Green Award" for their green cleaning program in 2008.

In addition to reducing the purchase of toxic chemicals, they introduced the use of microfiber wiping-rags and mops. These tools are so much more effective and easier to use that they phased-out the use of most of the typical heavy mops and buckets in favor of light-weight microfiber products that can be easily laundered for re-use. This also reduces water consumption and potential for injury from lifting the heavy water buckets.

In-house training was provided to all custodial staff on how to clean rooms, particularly bathrooms, from start to finish. This training included the proper use of cleaners and dispensing equipment, as well as new tools and newly standardized operating procedures. They were careful to prevent miscommunication by informing staff that existing inventories would gradually be used-up and replaced with less hazardous products. In addition, they produced a new Custodial Maintenance Policy and updated their Operating Manual to reflect these changes.

The slow transition brought about by the decision to first consume existing inventories not only gave workers time to familiarize themselves with the new chemicals and tools, but also avoided the costs and hazards of disposal of existing stocks.

According to Lorri Traylor, Transit Chief "the use of green products and processes has removed the build-up of old cleansers on some floors and they have never been cleaner."

The green cleaning program has succeeded in improving cleanliness, standardizing operating procedures, reducing costs, improving indoor air quality, and reducing worker injury. For their team efforts, Transit's Custodial Maintenance crew won an award for cleaning excellence from King County's Green Building Program in 2008.

Jerry Rutledge, Manager, adds: "I am fortunate to work with such a dedicated team that has embraced the concepts of a green program and have successfully implemented green cleaning procedures from which we can all benefit. I think that over time the biggest benefit will be the improved health of custodial workers and building occupants. Reducing the daily exposure to cleaners and chemicals in the work place, improving the indoor air quality and providing a safe and sanitary working environment are goals we all want to achieve. We hope our policy and program will be a model that others will consider."

***Custodial Maintenance Policy (excerpt)***

To ensure clean facilities by using products responsibly, encompassing not only environmentally preferred cleaning products but equipment, tools, processes, standards, task schedules and frequencies, that contribute toward implementation of a total green cleaning program.

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## Implementation Summary

Transit's Custodial Work Group has successfully:

- updated their operating manual to include sustainable cleaning procedures;
- reduced their chemical use from 30 to 2 main cleaners that are Green Seal and EcoLogo certified;
- used microfiber cloths and mops, which work better, reduce water consumption, and are laundered and reused;
- provided in-house training for staff on the effective use of new cleaners, equipment and procedures;
- reduced costs by purchasing fewer products and diluting them properly; and
- improved worker health and safety by reducing chemical use and better indoor air quality.

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## For More Information

*The following four documents are available for download on our [bulletins web page](#):*

- Transit Custodial Green Cleaning and Conservation Program Presentation
- Transit Custodial Maintenance Operating Manual
- Transit Custodial Maintenance Green Cleaning Policy
- Washington State Cleaning Industry Professionals Sustainable Cleaning Standards

*All of the following documents link directly to other websites:*

- Green Seal Environmental Standard for:
  - [Industrial and Institutional Cleaners \(GS-37\)](#)
  - [Industrial and Institutional Floor-Care Products \(GS-40\)](#)
  - [Hand Cleaners and Hand Soaps Used for Industrial and Institutional Purposes \(GS-41\)](#)
  - [Cleaning Services \(GS-42\)](#)
- [EcoLogo Standard](#)
  - [Hardsurface Cleaners \(CCD-146\)](#)
- [EPA's Design for the Environment \(DfE\)](#)
- [Green Cleaning Purchasing Guide - Responsible Purchasing](#)
- [Green Cleaning Network](#)



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## Environmental Purchasing Program

The King County Environmental Purchasing Program assists County agencies in implementation of King County [Executive Policy CON-7-1-2](#), which requires agencies to use recycled and other environmentally preferable products wherever practicable.

The program assembles information about these products and makes it available to specific agency users who can evaluate them and develop applications in County projects.

These environmental purchasing bulletins contain information about the results of product evaluations and other accomplishments of County agencies. We hope this information will help you find ways to use environmentally preferable products in the work of your agency and that you will contact us if we can help you with further information or if you have suggestions.